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ABSTRACT

The reading clinic at the University of Virginia continues to refine its test battery every year: a new refinement involves collection of more naturalistic language samples and writing samples to add depth to the understanding of children's developing language structures. The "tell a story to get a story" protocol provides a method for new reflection as the teacher or diagnostician tells a personal narrative and then passes the story turn to the child. Twenty-five teachers enrolled in a graduate introductory reading diagnosis course were introduced to the protocol: 21 completed an assignment to try out the protocol. The protocols, oral transcriptions, and written personal narratives of 8 children (in grades K-5) were analyzed. Analysis indicated that the teachers were using neutral sub-prompts and were careful to listen to children as they told their narratives. Teachers in the class were surprised and delighted with the comparisons that could be made between the two forms of narratives. The graduate students also learned how important it is for teachers to instruct children in spelling. By placing the oral transcription next to the written narrative, teachers can see the strengths of a child's own language. The two forms show a child's ability to transfer thought from one sphere to another and the confidence s/he has in the act of writing. (Contains 7 references and 4 figures of data; an appendix contains each child's diagnostic summary, transcribed personal narratives, and written narrative.) (NKA)

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Using Personal Narratives During Diagnosis:

Clinical Revelations

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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When children are brought to a university reading clinic for an assessment of their difficulties in learning to read, the standard protocol for completing the assessment includes measures of word recognition, oral and silent reading, comprehension, and fluency. In addition, some clinicians investigate stages of word knowledge (spelling) and collect writing samples. In the last decade, individual language batteries and clinical tests of such phonological skills as pseudo-word decoding and rapid automatized naming have added further information to the student case profile.

In our clinic, which is the second oldest reading clinic in the United States, we continue to refine our test battery every year. In addition to all of the above instruments, we have become interested in collecting more naturalistic language samples and writing samples to add depth to our understanding of children's developing language structures. The work of McCabe and Peterson—the "tell a story to get a story" protocol—has provided us a method for new reflection (McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Peterson & McCabe, 1987). Basically, the technique involves the teacher or diagnostician telling her own personal narrative ("I was stung by a bee yesterday. It hurts so much. Has that ever happened to you?) and then passing the story turn to the child. The personal narrative is defined as an oral record told by the speaker of something that happened to him.

The McCabe & Peterson language elicitation technique has been field-tested by the original researchers and extended as a means of recognizing differences in children's cultural backgrounds (McCabe, 1997). Teachers trained in this technique, for example, become aware of the value of listening to children without interruption (Abouzeid & Austin, 1996; Cazden, 1994). In addition, they grow in the understanding that the personal narratives of children from different cultural backgrounds may be different from their own (Dyson & Genishi, 1994; McCabe, 1997). The "tell a story" protocol has also been coded by speech/language therapists as a more naturalistic way to record a child's story-telling (McCabe & Rollins, 1994). McCabe and Rollins have arrived at norms for the classic storytelling expected of Western European children ages three through nine

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years growing up in this country. These norms allow language clinicians to rank a child's narrative attempts against the standard.

We thought it would be interesting to add the "tell a story to get a story" protocol to our clinical battery. We wanted both an oral narrative transcription and a written language production on the same topic. In order to do this we trained graduate reading students in a beginning diagnosis course in the technique of collecting a personal narrative. We felt that an awareness of children's personal narrative differences related to their cultures would be strong clinical training. In addition, we felt that the inclusion of an oral transcription next to a writing sample would be a more naturalistic and interesting way to collect language information for cases.

Twenty-five teachers enrolled in a graduate introductory reading diagnosis course were introduced to the "tell a story to get a story" protocol at the beginning of their training. They were asked to select a child with whom they might continue working throughout the course and try out the technique.Twenty-one of twnety-five completed this assignment; eight samples are presented here. Those protocols and the children's oral transcriptions and written personal narratives form the subject of this paper. We summarized the children's diagnostic information in outline form and then compared the personal and written narratives.

The demographics of the children are as follows: two children were kindergartners, one was a first grader, three were eight-year old third graders, one was a fourth grade student, and one was in the fifth grade. Interestingly enough, all children were Western European in their ethnicity, despite the fact that the locale in which the class was taught contains a number of English as Second Language students. There were six boys and two girls who were selected by their teachers for this diagnosis assignment. One child received services from Special Education; all the rest were from Regular Education classrooms. (Please see Figure One.)

Next we looked at each child's literacy knowledge. Reading and spelling levels inform our understanding of children's writing productions. Information is summarized in Figure Two with full profiles contained in the Appendix. Four children were instructional at the preprimer (very early beginning reading) level. This included the two kindergartners, the first grader, and one of the third grade children. The three younger children of this group were Early Letter Name spellers—they used the names of letters to signify word beginnings and endings in their writing. None of these children consistently used vowels in single syllable words. The older boy did include short vowel substitutions in his writing, so he would be classified as a more advanced speller, at the full Letter Name stage.

Typically, as children's reading levels advance, their spelling progresses. The third grade girl was a Primer/First Grade reader; Matthew, in the third grade, was reading at the second grade level. Both of these children, however, were still Letter Name stage spellers. The fourth and fifth graders were reading well below their grade placement, at the second grade instructional level. They spelled most short vowel single syllable words

correctly and needed instruction in long vowel spelling patterns. These children are said to be at the Within Word Pattern stage of spelling—they are learning the vowel patterns that form long vowel pronunciations.

All children's personal narratives were elicited using the "tell a story to get a story" paradigm. Each teacher collected three narratives and chose one for analysis according to the McCabe and Rollins protocol. Although teachers' prompts are not indicated, we can infer them from the children's stories. Three stories involved personal injury. They included trips to the hospital, getting shots, falling off bikes, and having Xrays. Two were about fishing expeditions. One of those did not get beyond a listing of who caught what. But one little boy elaborated his story by telling how the man came to check his dad's fishing license so they went to McDonalds! Two boys described personal challenges involving catching a scary spider and learning how to ride a four-wheeler. Finally, Sam told the story of a bully.

In every case, the elicitation procedure as transcribed indicated that teachers were using neutral sub-prompts and were careful to listen to children as they told their narratives. (Transcriptions for each child are contained in the Appendix.) We had tried to warn the teachers about the dangers of interrupting or of leading children from their story by interspersed questions. In a former attempt of this sort, we had considerable difficulty with teachers interrupting children's narratives (Abouzeid, Rosemary, and Austin, 1995). This appears to be crucial training if the narrative is to be part of our diagnostic procedure.

Next, we examined the children's written narratives and compared them to oral narratives (See Figures Three and Four). The three youngest children, Luke, Jessica, and Bud, drew pictures for their written narratives. For children this age, pictures are often the means of expression. The pictures illustrated the personal narrative they had just told. One, Jessica's, was more elaborate than the others—she created a three panel drawing complete with invented spelling, closely retelling her orally told story. Luke's drawing was two tadpole figures, legs and arms akimbo, depicting himself with his father trying to pull his tooth! This was the most immature writing and drawing of the group. He did use some letters but there appeared to be no letter-sound correspondence to his caption. Bud drew a spider in a web—the BIG spider that scared and taunted him in his personal narrative. The letters accompanying it were SIT.

Three children, Megan, Matthew, and Shawn, wrote long and detailed narratives that mirrored almost to the word their oral narratives. Each wrote a notebook page. All the children appeared intent on writing but their spelling hampered their ability to share their thoughts as fully as they had done orally. Shawn used the connectors "and then..." to connect eight events. His written narrative was probably more truthful than his oral one—in the oral narrative about the game warden coming to check fishing licenses, he had spent some time telling the listener that he had caught the biggest fish. In the written version, everyone caught big fish!

Finally, Derick and Sam wrote the shortest narratives. Derick's personal narrative was about fishing—but there was no high point, no resolution of a problem, no conclusion--just a listing of everyone catching fish! His written story followed the same pattern. He generated four lines ("me and mie [my] bad [dad]") with so many problems with spelling and letter reversals that writing must have been painful. The contrast lies in the comparison of his oral transcription with the written one. He was able to generate many ideas orally. But in writing, his problems become apparent. Derick is a third grader who is reading on a preprimer level. Sam, on the other hand, is a fifth grader who is receiving LD services. Sam is reading two to three years below his grade placement. His personal narrative was about a bully who hit him in art class and what happened after. He adds a moral to his story, "From now on, I'm staying away from him." His writing was cohesive and more to the point than his oral narrative. He was able to write his story in two sentences, four lines of paper, connecting his thoughts together with "and's" and "so". His written form was concise and to the point.

Teachers in the class were surprised and delighted with the comparisons that could be made between the two forms of narratives. They felt that while the oral narratives allowed the child to give more detail, it also allowed them to "prewrite" their written narrative. They thought that the children's ideas "flowed" more readily in writing after the oral narrative. They made note of the pauses that were evident in oral narratives—pauses that signaled a child's thinking. These pauses don't show in written formats. They also learned to let the child give the story. This takes patience and practice but yields good results. For example, Jessica had a difficult time structuring her personal narrative but her written form was creative and energetic—she tried lots of invented spelling and did picture captions as well. The teacher listening to Jessica's stories learned a lot about this little girl.

The graduate students also learned how important it is for teachers to instruct children in spelling. When children get a handle on letter sound associations, they have the power to communicate their thoughts in writing. Jessica, a kindergartener, was able to communicate through her writing using invented spellings. Derick, the third grader not yet identified for special services in his school, shows very clearly in his writing that he is in desperate need of appropriate instruction. For Derick, working in third grade reading material and spelling third grade words is completely misplaced instruction. If we look more closely at his diagnostic profile, we can see that his phonological awareness skills were below those of a first grade child. Derick is in need of intervention immediately. A teacher paying attention to the barometer of development—writing—would have seen that much earlier. And Sam, who was receiving intervention services, had gained enough control of his writing that by fifth grade, his written narrative expressed a personal experience with a bully, his reaction, and a moral in well-designed sentences. Sam's oral narrative served as a springboard for his writing and his writing benefited from the rehearsal.

A heightened sensitivity to children's personal narratives would appear to hold many possibilities for the teacher/clinician. By placing the oral transcription next to the written narrative, teachers can see the strengths of a child's own language. The two forms show

a child's ability to transfer thought from one sphere to another and the confidence s/he has in the act of writing. The inclusion of the transcribed oral narrative in Derick's case profile, for example, allows the teacher/clinician to consider using his strength in his remediation. Derick can be encouraged to participate in the exchange of personal narratives with his teacher. Those can be transcribed into material Derick can read. In addition, the teacher can point out the letter sound correspondences he needs to learn—the association between the letter B, the sound /b/ with lots of words that match that beginning sound, etc. Derick can learn to use his expert oral voice to support his burgeoning written one. The same can hold true of children whose language development is delayed. By learning to write, these children can "hold onto" language on the page like they cannot do in their heads.

Contrasts such as these and others will continue to emerge as we continue to collect these narratives and address them in our weekly clinical staffings. It is our hope that future reading specialists trained by us will become attuned to the diversity of all children, their cultural differences as well as the differences that develop in children's oral and written language related to past instruction.

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Figure one. Children We Studied

Name	Age	Grade	Ethnicity	Parent Occupation	Services
Luke	5	K	Western European	Medical doctor	Regular ed
Jessica	5	K	Western European	Not known	Regular ed
Bud	6	1	Western European	teacher	Regular ed
Megan	8	3rd	Western European	Child care provider	Regular ed
Matthew	8	3rd	Western European	mechanic	Regular ed
Derick	8	3rd	Western European	Homemaker	Regular ed
Shawn	9	4th	Not known	Not known	Regular ed
Sam	9	5th	Western European	Not known	LD services

Figure Two. Profile of Children

Name	Age	Grade	Reading Level	Spelling Level	Oral Narrative	Written Narrative
Luke	5	K	Preprimer	ELN	My Tooth	Drawing w/writing
Jessica	5	K	Preprimer	ELN	I got hurt…	I was riding my bike and fell off…
Bud	6	1	Preprimer	ELN	One time…	Drawing (no words)
Megan	8	3rd	Primer/1	LN	I fell and bend my arm…	I hurt my arm…
Matthew	8	3rd	2	LN	One day I was at my dad's	Wons I was over at my dad's…
Derick	8	3	Preprimer	LN	Me and my daddy me and him…	Me and mie bad whnt phih…
Shawn	9	4	2	WWP	One day I was fishin'	One day I was fish…
Sam*	9	5	2/3	WWP	I was in art class and this boy…	One day I was siting in a chair and…

Figure Three. Characteristics of Children's Personal Narratives (oral)

Name	Type of Narrative	Beginning Line
Luke	Classic narrative	One time when at this hotel my tooth was really loose
Jessica	Classic, delivered with hesitation; Teacher prompting	I got hurt. (Teacher: okay...) And I had to go to the doctor.
Bud	Classic (articulation problems evident)	One time there was this big spider down at Stonewall
Megan	Classic	This ... and ... I fell and I bend my arm back
Matt	Classic	One day I was over at my dad's and he went over to get his friend's
Derick	Chains	My my daddy me and him went fishin' ... my baby brother...
Shawn	Classic	(After telling one fishing episode) One day I was fishing AGAIN
Sam*	Classic	I was ... I was in art class ... and this boy named Ricky ... he hit me

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Figure Four. Characteristics of Children's Written Narratives

Name	Characteristics of writing	Writing
Luke	Drawing with letters	Random letters
Jessica	3 panel drawing of oral narrative; invented spelling	I *wes rar* my *bie* and I *fd* off.*Ann wae* to *bw* the *deth.Ann w* to to the *ben*.
Bud	Drawing of spider, one label	SIT (spider)
Megan	Classic narrative; 6 events, followed the oral narrative	I hurt my arm at *Maxis gobing* and my mom took Ashley to my *grarmal*. *Me* mom went to a Lot of places
Matt	Began with once. . ; 10 sequenced events; ended with "the end"	*Wons* I was over at my dads he got his *frind fole willer* and we drived it to the woods and back then...
Derick	One sentence with four event sequence; no high point	Me and *mie bad whnt fhih* and my *duthr* and I *kut a fhih* and my *bad kut* a *fhih* and
Shawn	Sentences connected by And then	One day I was fish fish. Then my mom dad *cat* small fish. Then I *catck* big fish.
Sam*	Cohesive, 2 long sentences, moral	One day I was *siting* in a chair in the art room and Ricky hit me hard and...

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APPENDIX

This appendix contains each child's

- Diagnostic summary *
- Personal narrative (transcribed)
- Written narrative

*Jessica's diagnostic summary is not included

LUKE

Age: 5 Grade: K
Placement: Regular Ed
Parents: medical doctor
Ancestry: Western European

Upper Case: 23/26
Lower Case: 15/26
Concept of Word: yes
Spelling Level: Early Letter Name
Segmentation: 10% (2/20)
Support: Rhythmic text with teacher support
Reading Level: Preprimer A

Personal narrative: "My Tooth"
Written narrative: drawing with writing

LUKE

My Tooth

One time, when at this hotel
my tooth was really loose...
and my, my dad tried to pull it out,
with a wash cloth,
but it didn't come out.
And...
so we waited until we got home.
We waited until a few weeks...
a few weeks...
and then it came out!
And he did magic!
It wasn't in the paper towel,
but this was at home,
it was in my ear!
He's good at magic!
He just pulled it out-POP!
And then he, then he just pulled it out...
I was like ALRIGHT!
When and.....
I, when I was outside and when I put my tongue in there (points to hole between teeth) it tastes kinda salty...
because the blood makes salt when the...
tooth comes out! (said in a whisper)

LUKE

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Narrative of Beginning Reader - Jessica

(Story prompt from teacher and other students about getting hurt)

Jessica: "I got hurt."

Ms. K: "Okay...uh-huh."

Jessica: And I had to go to the doctor.

Ms. K: "Uh-huh."

Jessica: "And my nurse...(pause)...and my aunt was a nurse."

Ms. K: "Uh-huh."

Jessica: "And she gave me a shot."

Ms. K: "Uh-huh."

Jessica: "And"....(pause)....

Ms. K: "And..."

Jessica: "And...I went home."

Ms. K: "Uh-huh."

Jessica: "And I went to bed."

Ms. K: "Uh-huh."

Jessica: "And...and the next morning I got up and I felt better."

Ms. K: "Oh...well, good!"

Jessica: "The end!"

Ms. K: "The end!"....(chuckle)

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JESSICA

I WES RAR
MY BIE

ANN
I RID

I was riding my bike and fell off.

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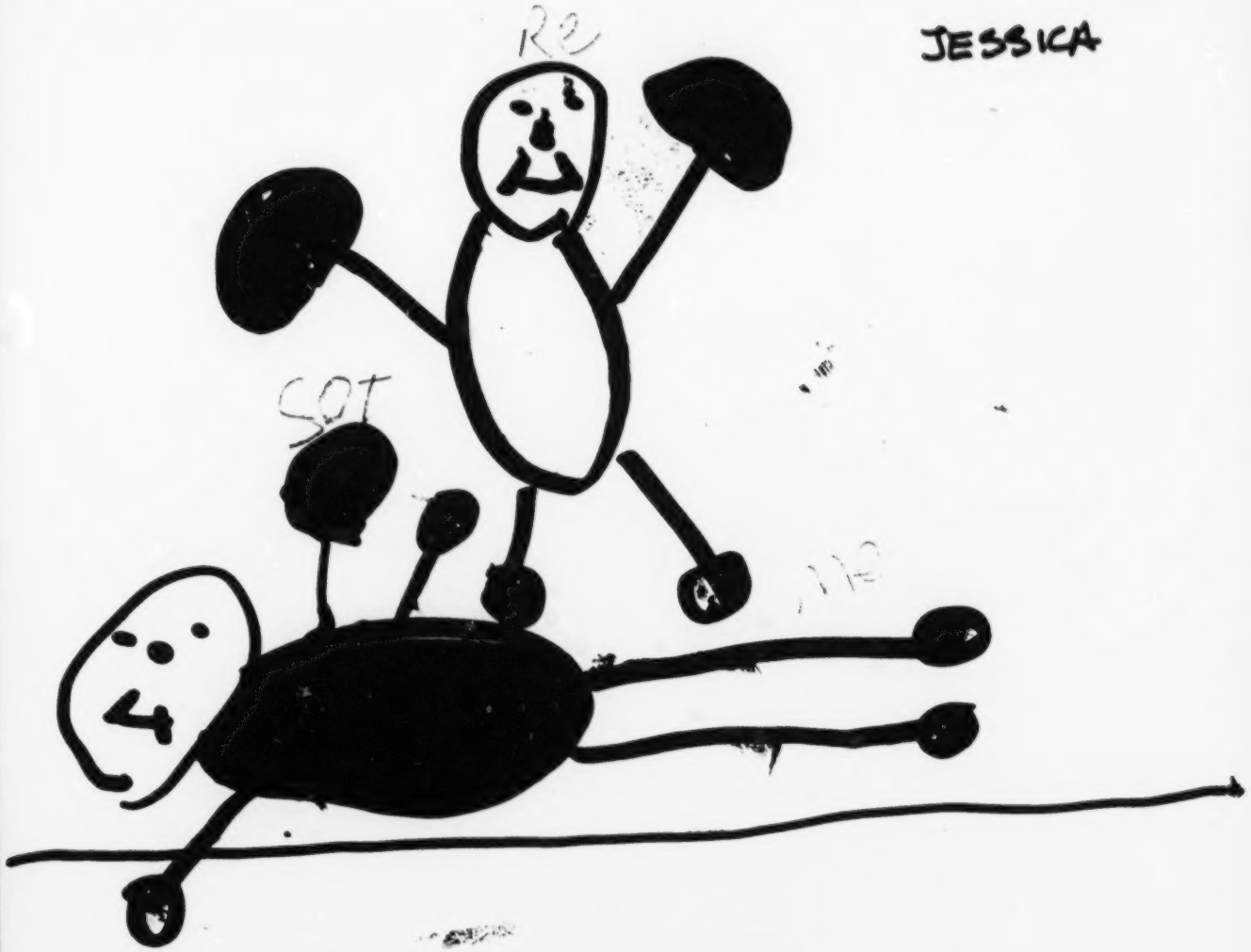
JESSICA



AND WAE
TO DR TEH
DOCTOR

And went to the
doctor.

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JESSICA

And went to
the bed.

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BUD

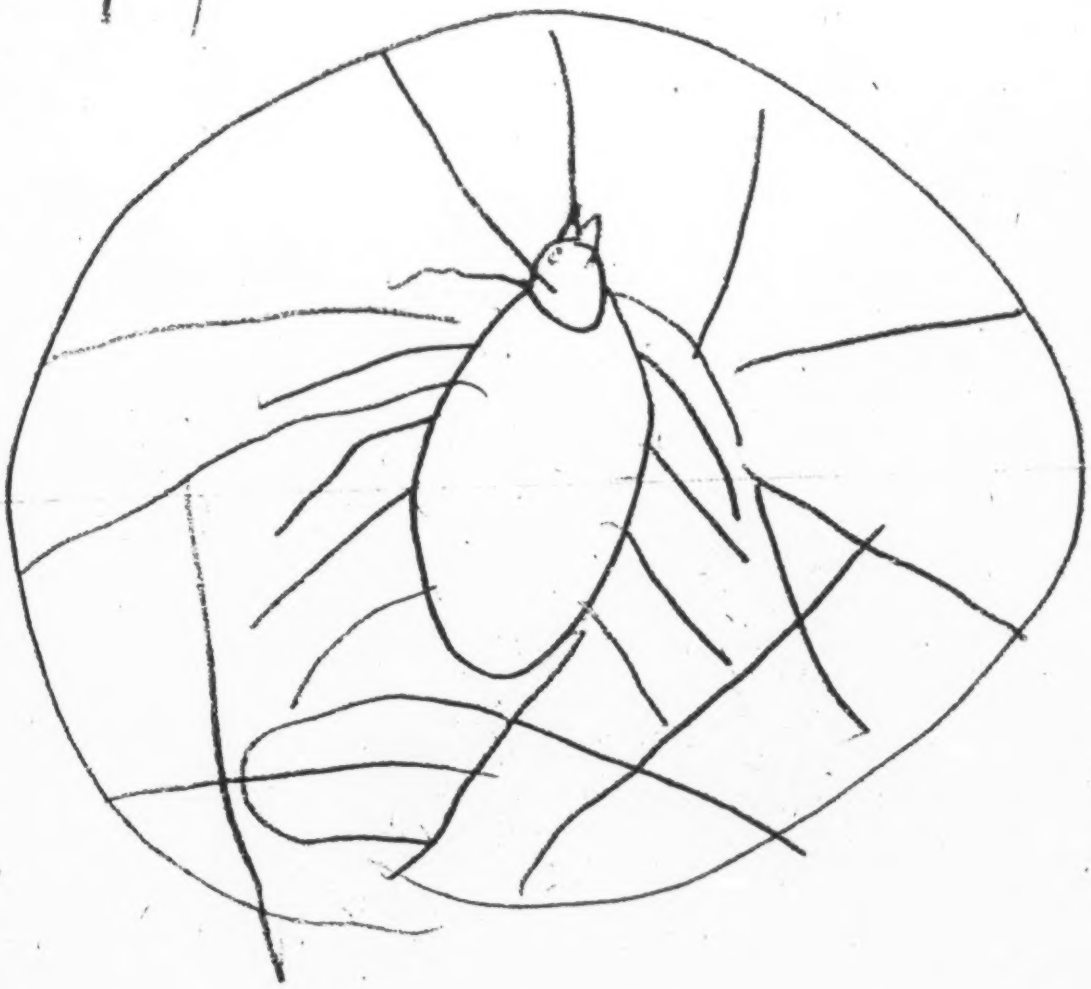
Age: 6 Grade: 1
Placement: Regular Ed
Parent: teacher
Ancestry: Western European

Upper Case:	26/26
Lower Case:	26/26
Concept of Word:	points to word for each syllable pronounced
Spelling Level:	Early Letter Name (no medial vowels represented)
Segmentation:	30% (6/20)
Support:	Rhythmic text with teacher support
Reading Level:	Preprimer A

Personal narrative: "One time there was this big spider..."
(evidence of articulation problem)
Written narrative: drawing (no words)

BVD

SIT



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MEGAN

Age: 8
Grade: 3
Placement: Regular Ed

Ancestry: unknown
Parents' Occupation: child care provider

WRI P/1st grade
WRC P/1
Comp 2 (Listening)
Reading Level: P/1

Spelling Late Letter Name
(learning short vowels)
Pseudo below 2nd grade

Phoneme Segmentation: 40%
Phoneme Deletion: 42%

Personal Narrative: "I fell and bend my arm back..."
Written Narrative: I hurt my arm at Max's

MEGAN

Narrative

This um _____ and I fell and I. . . I bend my arm back and um hurt it and it was late. Then, Then um then my mom brung Ashley to my Grandma's house and she took me to the hospital. Well, she took to another place but they didn't have shot testes that you could, you could um look your arm and everything and we went to a lot of places that didn't have it so she had to go to emergency center. And she went um to the emergency center, um to see my arm and I had to ride in this little wheelchair and they tested on my arm then I seen my doctor as Um for checking me and taking blood and he, he looked at my um he looked at my um shot test and I didn't have-- my um arm was okay. So I went home and I uh I was fine then and then I had to get long time I had to go back because Ashley hurt her arm. And uh she had a new little thing and she gets it tooken off I think next Tuesday or something like that and her arm will be better.

MEGAN

Megan (4)

Oct 5, 11

I hart my arm (at max is looking) and my mom took Ashley to my grandmal: ... Me mom went to ... lot of places pot there lid not have tasts (take at) tom the ... m. She went to the emkee cater and I got me arm Jat. My arm and tan ... I sol my dotor he cath my tast it was good I want home it was find. I went a long tim Ashley hart her arm she it is

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gonto take it of on

Tuesday.

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MATTHEW

Age: 8
Grade: 3
Placement: Regular Ed

Ancestry: Western European
Parents' Occupation: housewife;mechanic

WRI 1st grade
WRC 2nd
Comp not established
Reading Level: 2

Spelling Late Letter Name
(learning short vowels correct)
Pseudo below 2nd grade

Phoneme Segmentation: 85%
Phoneme Deletion: 65%

Personal Narrative: "One day I was at my dad's..."
(rided)
Written Narrative: Wonz I was over at my dads...
(same immaturity w/verb tenses)

MATTHEW

One day I was at my dads and he went over to get his friends, Jeremy Nesselrods, his four wheeler and we went and rided it through the woods and back and then we came back to eat supper.

Then we rided it some more after supper was over. Then he when we came back he let me drive the four wheeler. I was scared at first. Then once I got the hang of it I felt fine. Then the next day (um) my dad went to get the four wheeler again and he made a log that I could drive up through and if he said if you could drive up through there he would buy me a four wheeler when I got older. I got through it and after a couple hits of the logs my dad said well that is pretty good for you. He said well I'll buy you one one day when you're older.

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1st story

Matthew C.

wons I was over at my dads he got his frind fole willer and we drive d it to the woods and back then wen we came back we eat soper then ayder dener we drived it some more then we came dack he let me drive it. The nest day he went and got the fole willer agen and he set a cors we logs he seed that if I code drive it thro this askel cors he wac baey me a fole wile wehe I get oder avte a foue bebs I got therow it and he seed that was go for my age. The End.

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DERICK

Age: 8
Grade: 3
Placement: Regular Ed

Ancestry: Western European
Parents' Occupation: housewife

Upper Case: 26/26
Lower Case: 26/26
Concept of Word: firm
Support: Story narrative /vocabulary control
Reading Level: Preprimer C

Spelling Level: Letter Name (learning short vowels)
Pseudo below 1st grade
WRI PP/P

Phoneme Segmentation: 85%
Phoneme Deletion: 47%

Personal Narrative: Me my daddy me and him went fishing.
Written Narrative: Me and *mie had whnt phih...*

DERICK

My my daddy
Me and him went fishing.
My baby brother
And, and ah, his friend's house he works
In a pond that his friend owns that he works with
And ah
We was fishing with worms.
And
A cat kept going in the water and stuff.
And I caught a fish.
My dad caught a fish.
My brother caught a fish that long (demonstrated length with hands).
My dad caught a fish this long (demonstrated length with hands).
And, I caught a fish about that long (demonstrated length with hands).
And, we went down to this other man's house.
He has a trout pond.
But, it ain't a pond.
It's a crick.
It's a small trout crick.
And, he has a place where the trout stays in a deep hole.
And, you can see the bottom.
It's not that very deep.
It probably that (shows with hands) deep.
And, you can see the bottom.
We seen this ole trout.
And, it had horns where his nose were.
It was a trout
And, these were rainbow trout.

Pause.

DERICK

Story #3

Me and mie bad whnt fhih
and my duthr and i kut a fhih
and my bad kut a fhih
and my duthr kut one to.

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SHAWN

Age: 9
Grade: 4
Placement: Regular Ed

Ancestry: unknown
Parents' Occupation: unknown

WRI 2nd grade
WRC 2nd/3rd
Comp 2nd/3rd
Reading Level: 2

Spelling Within Word Pattern
(short vowels correct; learning long vowels)
Pseudo below 2nd grade

Phoneme Segmentation: 70%
Phoneme Deletion: 32%

Personal Narrative: One day I was fishin' again!
Written Narrative: One day I was fish fish...
(then...and then...)

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SHAWN

Narrative Number Two
Set

Shawn: Huh, o.k. One day I was fishing with my cousin and my brothers and sisters. We caught a lot of fish but there wasn't enough room for 'em all. Um, Um, Um. So, and my mom said we had to leave some of them there with my mom. We had to come back and pick 'em up after we got done cleaning all the fish out. They kept on fishing. That's all.

(After giving this narrative, Shawn said, " I have another story that goes with this one. Do you want to hear it?" He was excited about fishing, so the recorder continued.)

Shawn: One day I was fishing AGAIN! Uh, I ha. I wa. I. My brother and my mom and dad kept on catching little fishes. So, I caught the biggest fish. We stayed there after a little while. My brother cau and my dad and mom caught the second biggest fish. Then, um, um, um, some guy came back to check for fishing license and to know how many fish we caught. We left then. Um. We went riding around. We went and bought a drink. Then we went to MacDonald's. Me and my brother got Happy Meals. That's all! Bye!

SHAWN

2

One day was fish coner,
and boath, siaer
We caten a lot of
fish. So we went
home. Then I
went home and
cleed the fish. Then
we came back thorack.

One day I was fish
fish. Then my mom
dad. cate samll fish.
Then I catck big fish
therm mom, and dad brothes
catct then 2 big fish.
Then a men came.
He wunt to see my dad
fish, fisk. Then we
went ride arounder.
Then we got a drick.
Then went to Mcamunds.

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SAM

Age: 9
Grade: 5
Placement: Regular Ed w/ LD services

Ancestry: Western European
Parents' Occupation: unknown

WRI 5th/6th grade
WRC 3rd/4th grade
Comp 2nd/3rd
Reading Level: 2/3

Spelling Within Word Pattern
(short vowels correct; learning long vowels)
Pseudo 17/35 (50%)

Phoneme Segmentation: 45%
Phoneme Deletion: 57%

Personal Narrative: "I was in art class and this boy named Ricky"
Written Narrative: One day I was *sitting* in a chair in the art room...

SAM

(3)

Sam: I was - I was in art class and this boy named Rickyyyy... ummm... Ricky, and he hit me on the back real hard and Ms. Allen seen what he did and then he went to the principals office and then ahh, then um, she sent a note home that told that he hit me and from now on I'm staying - I stay away from him. Every now and then I see him tear off those birthday things from the... locker, from the lockers... That's it.

SAM

One day I was siting in a chair in the art room and Ricky hit me hard on the back and the art teacher saw him. Then she told my teacher and my mom and dad so from now on I sta away from him.

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